

## **Real Stories of Young Entrepreneurs in Wisconsin**

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**School & Grade:** 12<sup>th</sup> grade at Hudson High School

**Business Name:** Custom Work

**What inspired you to start your business? Tell us about your inspiration, your idea and how it became a reality.**

When I was a little kid, I was interested in tools, would fix my bike for myself and do other little projects. My grandfather helped guide and show me the basics. Then I got to middle school and they had CTE classes and I was interested in those and had a lot of fun doing what I loved to do. The first thing I made in these classes was a jewelry box and a wooden car. After that, my Granma gave me a tape measure and I decided to begin making things at home. Then someone asked me to make a birdhouse and I did it and thought I should attempt making more and sell them. I did that and it worked! I continued to make more and more. I then realized that I could start my own business. I could expand my business by creating other items to sell such as wooden signs and Adirondack chairs. The most significant public display of my work is located at The Orchard, a restaurant in Baldwin, WI. I was hired to make all the tables and booths as well as some chairs, checkerboard tables, corner tables, decorative wooden flags to display, and many more items they needed. Through this display of my work, people began to ask more questions. Many hired me for individual projects. I also chose to expand my business to include landscaping. I have built decks, designed layouts and have executed many projects from beginning to end.

**Describe your product / service, purpose / goals, features / benefits, unique selling point.**

The name I have chosen for my business is Custom Work. It is simple and describes what I do. I have created many items in masses to sell such as birdhouses, wooden signs (some personal, some quotes or phrases); however, most of what I do is essentially custom-designed for each individual customer, to help meet their needs.

Essentially the ultimate goal for my business is customer satisfaction. I feel it is important to take the time to listen attentively to the needs, ideas and expected outcomes my customers have. I present ideas to help reach those goals and offer suggestions to them to help enhance their projects. In the end, if my customers aren't happy, I redo it until they are! I always think to myself – there is a way and I will figure it out!

**Tell us about yourself and how you make your business succeed.**

I came to America and was adopted when I was ten years old. I had many obstacles and challenges with that move alone. I had the incredible challenge of first learning the English language.

Since I was young, I have always liked to stay busy and look for things to do. To this day, I feel that I am a driven, self-motivated student, leader and now businessman. I work diligently to do my best and try to make my customers happy. I am a leader. I am self-sufficient and I do what is best and help guide people with their decisions. I have many skills, I am innovative and creative.

I am involved in sports (tennis, soccer and wrestling) so I must also know time management, sportsmanship, leadership, and diligence. I feel that I have many talents that not only include the hard skills of woodworking and landscaping, but the soft skills of communication and building customer relationships.

I display my leadership skills within my business, at school and through sports activities. In 2012, I earned the Bi-State Champion title in wrestling – representing the top honor in a 54 team tournament. I also have placed numerous times in wrestling competitions, including Conference Champion in 2011 in the 140# weight class.

Another example of obstacles I have overcome is when I was hired to build a boat launch for a customer on Lake Milledieu in Hudson, WI. I was challenged because I had to transport the launch on a pontoon to get it to its location. Unfortunately, it wasn't the best idea as the launch sunk to the bottom of the lake. I had to cast out to get it and get into the water to get it back on the pontoon to transport. The water was below freezing, I had waders on; nevertheless, it was cold and a significant challenge.

At age 16, I was presented with a challenge when I was asked to design tables and booths for The Orchard, a restaurant in Baldwin, WI. I had gone over several ideas and they chose the design they felt could best work in their business. The video I have submitted showcases many photographs of this work. I not only made all the tables (including the dining tables and bar tables), but made the checkerboard tables, corner tables, decorative wooden flags, wine glass racks, closet organization systems, etc. This was truly a challenge as I had a summer to complete this work. I also help to redo the floors and some of the walls as it was formerly a barn and apple orchard, so much restoration was needed. I am very proud of the work I have done here and it has helped propel my business to the next level.

At 17, I was hired to construct a wrap-around deck on a local home. I was excited for this opportunity, even though it was the first time I had done a single deck of this magnitude.

My business brings together the best of all worlds. I get to make my passion my life, work with people to help make them happy and get to make money while doing so.

**What are your future goals and vision for your business? How do you propose to develop your business?**

I devote much of my summer and extra time to my business for continued success and growth. I am willing to do whatever it takes to succeed. I know the value of additional education; therefore, I am planning to attend a technical college so I can earn a degree in construction and certification to be an electrician. This will enable me to expand my business to build homes and potentially commercial buildings – taking my talents and skills to the next level.

In the meantime, I am expanding my woodworking business as I continue to get more clients. I am also planning to hire another individual to help with my lawn care business as that has grown to need more manpower and equipment to meet customer needs.

I realize that the labor market data does not presently support construction to the degree I will need; however, I am confident that with the client base I have and through the referrals I have been given, my current business will expand enough to meet the goals I have set and beyond. During the time I am at the technical college, I will develop my business plan to reflect necessary expansion and growth potential. That way I will be able to make a seamless transition into the next phase of my business.